

MINUTES - REGULAR SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 2007
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SELECTMEN'S MEETING ROOM
TOWN HALL
7:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:00 PM in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

Chairman Firenze noted the passing of Arthur Craig, a longtime resident, schoolteacher, and baseball coach, and of Henry Curry, a long time Belmont Police officer.

There were no questions.

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

The Board moved: To enter executive session to discuss litigation and subsequently to return to open session.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0). The Board entered executive session at 7:02 PM.

(During executive session no substantive motions were made.)

The Board returned to open session at 7:14 PM.

Granite Sidewalk - 162 Washington Street - Dr. Richard Rosen

Dr. Rosen is seeking permission to pay \$15,000 to have a granite sidewalk installed in front of his property. The sidewalk would be the same size as the current concrete sidewalk. He said it will be more durable than concrete and is more appropriate for a historic home since concrete sidewalks are a relatively newer invention.

DPW Director Peter Castanino said if this is approved it will be impossible to say no to any other residents who want granite or brick sidewalk. He said these surfaces are more slippery than concrete. Also the sidewalk plows may damage the granite. The Pavement Management Committee has recommended standardized sidewalks across the town.

After some discussion, the Board moved: To support the DPW director's position in denying the request.

Motion carried 2-1 (Firenze and Solomon aye, LeClerc nay).

No Sidewalk Installed - 52 Washington Street - Ms. Collin Wild

Ms. Wild is asking that no sidewalk be installed in front of her house. This is the oldest house in Belmont and was built by John Chenery in 1654. There has never been a sidewalk in front of the house and she is concerned that a concrete sidewalk will detract from the historic atmosphere of the property. She shared a letter from the Belmont Historical Society in support of her request.

Community Development Director Glenn Clancy said the Board has stated that it wants to make Belmont more pedestrian friendly and concrete sidewalks serve that goal as well as being handicapped accessible.

After some discussion, the Board moved: To support DPW Director Castanino's recommendation that a sidewalk be installed consistently along the entire street.

Motion passed 2-1 (Firenze and LeClerc aye, Solomon nay).

The Board asked Mr. Clancy to update the Board regarding some design work being done by Cambridge on Blanchard Road.

Mr. Clancy said he attended a public meeting held by Cambridge which is looking to make some road changes. Cambridge is alleging that the town line moved in 1955 and is now further into Belmont up to 8 feet from the road right-of-way. The changes they would like to make would require that this new town line be recognized, placing the land that is needed for the road changes within Cambridge boundaries, including a number of trees and the stone wall that has served as the boundary.

It does not appear to be legally clear where the boundary lies. Chairman Firenze said the change is designed to make the road safer at higher speeds, whereas Belmont's goal has been to slow traffic down.

Selectman Leclerc noted that Town historian Richard Betts has said there was a handover of land to Cambridge but it was never formally filed with the state.

The Board agreed that it is appropriate to engage Town Counsel to clarify this matter.

The Board moved: To request the assistance of counsel in determining where the Cambridge-Belmont Town line legally lies.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board expressed its strong displeasure that private property was invaded by Cambridge authorities without the consent of the property owners and asked that those sentiments be conveyed by Mr. Younger and Mr. Clancy to the City of Cambridge.

Fire Department - ALS Discussion

Fire Chief Dave Frizzell discussed with the Board his recommendation that the Town move toward implementation of in-house delivery of Advanced Life Support (ALS) services. This will result in gross revenue improvements for the Town of approximately \$186,000, though there will be associated costs. Some neighboring communities have recently made this change and the contracts being offered by Belmont's current providers are becoming less favorable.

There are three Fire Department retirements coming in the next few months and three more in the following year, which would allow the department to hire trained paramedics and train them to be firefighters. Currently there is only one paramedic on the force. The eventual goal would be to have 16 paramedics on the force or 4 per shift. There would be a marginal decrease in response time and all patients in Belmont would have access to ALS services.

Chief Frizzell is requesting permission to notify the state of the Town's intention to elevate its service level to ALS and to obtain a paramedic preference list from the state to fill these positions. A draft implementation plan would then be drawn up which would be submitted to the state when finalized. The equipment would be purchased in January 2009 with a target date to begin ALS service of July 1, 2009.

Chairman Firenze expressed concern about missing golden opportunities for regionalization and/or outsourcing if other towns are all in the same boat. Chief Frizzell explained that we cannot get a paramedic preference list without first stating the Town's intention to implement ALS. Chairman Firenze does not feel he has sufficient facts to be comfortable making this decision at this time.

There was discussion. It was confirmed that if the town hires paramedics, they would be paid more but could not use their paramedic training unless the town is licensed for ALS.

The Board moved: To express its intention to move in the direction of providing ALS services and to authorize Chief Frizzell to work with an advisory group appointed by the Selectmen to study the economics of the proposal including opportunities for regionalization and outsourcing and prepare a draft implementation plan for discussion in January 2008.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Belmont Housing Trust Discussion

The Housing Trust (HT) appeared before the Board for a general discussion of affordable housing in Belmont.

Judith Feins, Acting Chair, said the HT knows that the time of creating new housing from town-owned properties has passed. The HT wants to proceed with the Board's suggestion of finding ways to convert existing housing to affordable housing. Surrounding towns are making strides in this area. The question is where the financial resources will come from to accomplish this. One method is by requiring contributions from developers in lieu of inclusionary zoning units.

There was discussion of the proposed 40R development and the letter that the Housing Trust wrote commenting on it. The HT's recommendation of increasing the number of units was based on discussions with developers which led to concerns that the lower number of units was not feasible for developers.

This led to a more general discussion of the HT's activities and priorities, followed by discussion of the appointment of a Community Preservation Act (CPA) study committee. Selectman Solomon said he feels the Board should abide by its previous vote to create such a committee. Selectman Leclerc agreed. Chairman Firenze said he does not believe it makes sense to move forward with a committee when there is practically no chance that a CPA could practically be adopted within the next year.

The Board moved: To rescind its former motion of February 5, 2007 authorizing a CPA committee.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: To appoint a CPA exploratory committee to study the feasibility and desirability of implementing the CPA in Belmont to report back in 6 months with a report and a revision of their mandate if they choose to do so, and that the membership shall consist of not more than 9 members.

Motion carried 2-1 (Firenze nay.)

Committee Appointments

The Board moved: To reappoint full members Judith Feins, Jonathan Jacoby and Ann Silverman, and alternate member Arthur Heron, to the Housing Trust.

Motion carries 2-1 (Firenze nay.)

The Board moved: To appoint Rebecca Harrold-Dasilva and Laura Northridge to the Cultural Council.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: To reappoint Laurie Graham, Ray Glazier, Janet MacDonald, and Joan Hantman to the Disability Access Commission.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: To appoint Charles Teague and Matthew McGovern to the Information Technology Advisory Committee.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board agreed to advertise for volunteers for a representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The Board noted that both Carla Moynahan and Bob Delhome would be superb appointments to the Planning Board but the Board must pick one.

The Board moved: To appoint Carla Moynahan to the Planning Board.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Traffic Advisory Committee: The Board verified that Philip Richmond was appointed for a 1 year term and Laurence McDonald for a 3 year term.

Zoning Board of Appeals: Bill Lovallo has decided to leave the ZBA.

The Board moved: To appoint Nicholas Ianuzzi as an associate member of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Capital Projects Overview Committee: Edward Ponzi has volunteered to serve on this committee. The committee has been meeting regularly and is already larger than originally planned. Despite Mr. Ponzi's qualifications, the Board does not intend to enlarge the committee at this time.

The Board moved: To appoint Camille Sarrouf to the Human Rights Commission.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Robert Taylor has declined his appointment to the Local Emergency Planning Committee.

Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

" The Harvard Lawn Fire Station RFP has been revised and will be sent to the Committee tomorrow to be issued ASAP. The new deadline for proposals to come in will be September 17. The minimum purchase price will be recommended by the Committee. The building was re-appraised at \$475,000.

" Town departments are reviewing documents for the Senior Center design and will return their comments by August 10th.

" Burke Land Company has signed the historic preservation agreement for the Central Fire Station, which should enable them to get a building permit for work to proceed. Chairman Firenze said Burke is still trying to get Historic District Commission approval for proposed changes to the building's addition. The project's restaurateur is still hoping to open for business in November.

" Pavement management: Washington Street work continues and will be completed this month. Curbing on Cross Street is beginning and will also be completed in August. Telephone pole wires have been moved on Pleasant Street.

" Police Station Feasibility Study - The Town has received 7 proposals from firms to conduct the study. The proposals will be reviewed by a subcommittee and 3 names will be forwarded to the Board.

" The Town's new retail liquor licenses have been forwarded to the state Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission for approval.

" The Town Hall Complex Building Committee has released funding for the Town Hall doors.

" Most of the department head performance reviews are completed and the remaining two will be finished this week.

IV. ACTION BY CONSENT

Police Chief McLaughlin's Recommendation for Appointment to Vacant Police Officer Position

Chief McLaughlin recommended the appointment of Matthew Benoit as a police officer.

The Board moved: To approve the Chief's recommendation and appoint Matthew Benoit as a Belmont Police officer.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0). The Board congratulated Mr. Benoit.

V. ACTION BY WRITING

Common Victualler's License Renewal - Café Fiorella (new owner)

The Board moved: To approve the license.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

Resolution in Support of the Mass Recycles Paper! Campaign

The Board moved: To approve the resolution.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

VI. OTHER

Chairman Solomon discussed a letter from Don Becker about a state grant to buy bike racks. The Board expressed interest and asked Mr. Younger to follow up on this.

The Board asked for an update on the bike path project. Mr. Conti will call MassHighway tomorrow to follow up.

The Board discussed whether signature gathering should be allowed inside Town buildings. The Board decided that this represents inappropriate political activity and should not be allowed. It was noted that the Library Trustees have the authority to set the policy for the use of the library, but the Board recommends that the Trustees consider setting a similar policy.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board moved: To enter executive session to discuss collective bargaining and subsequently to return to open session.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board entered executive session at 10:14 PM.

(During executive session one substantive motion was made and passed unanimously.)

The Board returned to open session at 10:24 PM.

The Board stated that in executive session it ratified a contract with SEIU.

The Board moved: To sign contracts with AFSCME and SEIU.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: To enter executive session to discuss value of real property and salaries for non-union employees, and not to return to open session.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board entered executive session at 10:25 PM.

(During executive session, one substantive motion was made and passed unanimously. The Board adjourned at 12:20 AM.)

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator